

22 OCT 1968

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director

SUBJECT : Planning for a Real-Time Photographic
Satellite System

1. During 1967 COMIREX undertook an exhaustive study of the possible need to apply satellite photography to the problems of early warning and indications. One of the most important findings of the study was that a reconnaissance capability to meet the needs for early warning could also make a major contribution to other surveillance requirements without detracting from its capability to do the indications task.

2. Early this year USIB requested NRO to review the COMIREX study and assess the feasibility of creating such a capability. Although the Director, NRO has not responded formally, the NRO Staff has passed a draft of its study to the COMIREX Staff informally. On the basis of this, it appears that an operational reconnaissance satellite system with real-time readout appears feasible within three to five years after a decision to proceed has been made. [redacted] is in the process of formulating his personal views on the trade-offs between the time and costs involved in acquiring such a capability.

3. I raise this matter at this time for two reasons. First, a real-time reconnaissance satellite is bound to have a tremendous impact on the way we do business in terms of organization, procedures, facilities, and equipment. Second, our preferences with respect to procedures and organization could in turn have

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significant effects on the technical decisions that will be made by NRO within the next year or two. I believe these two factors make it necessary for us to study these problems now and to begin the financial and personnel planning required.

4. Clearly, this is a community problem which the USIB will eventually turn over to COMIREX. Because of the Agency's role in NPIC, I recommend that we take the lead in this matter by establishing a task force to study the problem, determine the CIA position, and guide the later COMIREX deliberations. I propose that you set up a task force with representation from the DDI, DDS&T, and CIA personnel on the COMIREX Staff. It may be desirable to have it chaired by someone from OPPE, but I would like to discuss this with you before you take action.

/s/ R. J. Smith

R. J. SMITH
Deputy Director for Intelligence

EWProctor:fbr (21 October 1968)

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